

VZCZCXRO1676
RR RUEH DU RUEH MR RUEH RN
DE RUEH SA #0250/01 0381147
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 071147Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3393
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN 5288
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 9554
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000250

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BY](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SAG NEGOTIATOR OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BURUNDI PEACE TALKS

PRETORIA 00000250 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. PolCouns and PolOff on 4 February met with SAG Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo, to discuss recent developments concerning the possible resumption of peace talks between the CNDD-FDD government and the Palipehutu-FNL after a six month stalemate. Though South African Safety and Security Minister Charles Ngakula will officially oversee the talks, Mamabolo said he will remain the SAG's key interlocutor. Mamabolo laid equal blame on both sides for past derailments, but is more optimistic that this round of peace talks will succeed given the FNL's desire to compete in 2010 elections. However, Jan Van Eck, one of the FNL's key advisors, told PolOff the same day that while the FNL agrees in principle to the resumption of talks, they still distrust Mamabolo, whom they view as biased, and would like him removed from the SAG's negotiating team. END SUMMARY.

SAG OPTIMISTIC

12. (C) On 4 February, PolCouns and PolOff met with SAG Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo, who opened the meeting by joking that "the process just keeps refusing to move forward." Throughout the discussion, Mamabolo appeared to lay equal blame on both sides for the most recent stalemate. The FNL, Mamabolo believes, was never really ready to compromise. Instead, he suspects the FNL backed out of the last peace deal because they wanted more time to collect weapons and recruit more soldiers in order to ensure themselves higher-ranking positions in the military. (NOTE: Mamabolo complained that the current demobilization process is perverse in that it is encouraging and rewarding rebels who continue to build their ranks. END NOTE)

13. (C) Mamabolo also said Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza's refusal to offer cabinet-level positions, Ambassadorships, or Directorships to the FNL contributed to the breakdown of past negotiations. Mamabolo complained that Nkurunziza has continually rebuffed Mamabolo's suggestion that he offer the FNL positions on the grounds that it would be "unconstitutional." Mamabolo said he does not see a problem with accommodating some of the rebels and will continue to press the issue. Mamabolo mentioned several times as an example of a good faith measure that Nkurunziza could "make up a cabinet position like Minister of State,"

for FNL leader Agathon Rwasa.

¶4. (C) Despite these hurdles, Mamabolo is more optimistic that new negotiations will succeed because "the FNL is more anxious to come back than in the past, given the need to make itself a legitimate and viable option in the upcoming 2010 election." He also said he has told Nkurunziza that he needs to once and for all accept the FNL into government, otherwise they will continue to be a destabilizing force if continually excluded from government.

MAMABOLO AND TANZANIA TO PLAY PROMINENT ROLE, RWASA LESS SO

¶5. (C) Mamabolo admitted that he will continue his role as the lead negotiator behind the scenes, even though Minister for Safety and Security Charles Ngakula will continue to be called the SAG's lead facilitator. Mamabolo described himself as Ngakula's "deputy," admitting that with the Qhimself as Ngakula's "deputy," admitting that with the current political climate in South Africa, it is difficult for Ngakula to travel much outside the country without it being perceived as either a dereliction or avoidance of his domestic portfolio. In a 3 February conversation with PolOff, Institute of Security Studies consultant Jan Van Eck (who has been advising the FNL) warned that Mamabolo's continued presence is going to be a sticking point with the FNL, who perceive Mamabolo as pro-government. Mamabolo fully acknowledged that he is not well-liked by the rebels, but called the accusation that he "twisted arms" during the last round of negotiations "utter nonsense." Mamabolo chalks up their distrust of him to the fact that "the FNL is being badly advised," without naming names.

¶6. (C) Van Eck also told PolOff "confidentially" that Tanzania will be playing a more prominent, though low-profile, role in negotiations. Van Eck told PolOff that

PRETORIA 00000250 002.2 OF 002

Tanzanian President Kikwete "realizes that Mamabolo is biased and that past negotiations have been unfair." According to Van Eck, Kikwete, who is "brave and determined," has asked his Foreign Minister Bernard Membe to drive the process "behind the scenes."

¶7. (C) As for who is driving the rebels, Mamabolo mentioned that while Rwasa still represents the FNL, "it is clear he has lost control." Mamabolo described Rwasa as a "figure-head like Mandela is to the ANC; the party needed his buy-in even though he was not always pulling the strings." Mamabolo believes that FNL Spokesperson Pasteur Habimana is instead pulling the strings. However, Mamabolo does not believe Habimana will return to Burundi for fear of being prosecuted for human rights violations, about which he has publicly bragged. Van Eck contradicted Mamabolo later that day, saying Rwasa continues to be in control, but did admit that Rwasa was a "non-emotional diplomat," while Habimana was "overly emotional and irrational." Van Eck complained that the rebels needed someone in between.

NEXT STEPS

¶8. (C) The SAG was granted on 03 February a twelve-month extension from the African Union to continue peace negotiations between the CNDD-led government and the FNL. Mamabolo said the SAG is looking at integrating all factions of the FNL within the next six months and then assessing when SAG troops can come home. After integration, the SAG is considering suggesting some sort of Truth and Reconciliation Process, "which would have to be driven by Burundi, not us," said Mamabolo. He also said the SAG intends to start talking to international donors, but did not elaborate which donors or for what purpose.

